

Mr BATCHELOR (Thomastown) - I speak in support of the Bills currently before the House. I have pleasure in supporting the Supply Bill because it has taken into account the key features of the government's social justice strategy. If asked to summarise the government's social justice strategy in three words, it can be done by identifying policies which enable equity, access and participation. They are overriding social objectives that must determine the distribution and allocation of government funds. If those considerations prevail, major government decisions, such as this Supply Bill and those that will follow, will enable the government to address some of the inequities faced by people in the outer suburban fringes of Melbourne.

My interest in the development of the outer fringe of Melbourne has been given added impetus by my election as the honourable member for Thomastown, an electorate comprised entirely of urban growth. It is the issue of outer suburban growth generally and the needs of the Thomastown electorate in particular that I shall address. However, before doing so I shall make some comments about the late Beth Gleeson.

Beth Gleeson was first elected to Parliament in 1985 and from that date until her death in December 1989 she was a fighter for the working people of her electorate. Beth's tireless contribution is set out in the pages of Hansard of 6 March this year when condolence speeches were made. It was my first day in Parliament and it was a sad occasion remembering the loss of a friend and a political ally.

Beth Gleeson recognised the needs of the outer suburban fringe, the needs of the suburbs and the needs of the families that live in them. She worked hard for the physical infrastructure, community amenities and human services so vital to the Thomastown electorate. I pay my personal tribute to Beth Gleeson and join with all members of Parliament, as we did on 6 March, in expressing my deep sympathy to Beth's family, her husband Mike, and daughters, Megan and Lisa.

My responsibility is to ensure that Beth Gleeson's work continues. I shall fight for the reallocation of resources to the geographic areas where urban growth is occurring and where the population explosion is taking place. The latest planning projections are contained in the January 1990 Ministry of Planning and Environment, Strategic Planning Division, Working Paper No. 3, entitled, "The Immediate Future-Towards the Year 2000. The working paper predicts that metropolitan Melbourne and its outskirts will grow by approximately 13 per cent between 1988 and 2001. In 1988 the estimated residential population of Greater Melbourne was 3 019 480. The projected population in the year 2001 is 3 414 000. In the same period the outskirts of Melbourne, the outer suburban fringes, are expected to grow by 42 per cent.

According to the Ministry of Planning and Environment documents, the combined local government areas of Whittlesea and Diamond Valley are expected to experience an increase in population of a staggering 49.9 per cent, producing an additional 72 000 residents. The population explosion is being managed by the Plenty Valley Strategic Plan, the first plan of Melbourne's priority growth areas to be exhibited. Released in 1989 it provides for new residential developments to accommodate the additional 72 000 people.

The three priority growth areas in Melbourne are: firstly, the Plenty Valley corridor, taking in the municipalities of Whittlesea and Diamond Valley; secondly, the SouthEastern corridor, incorporating the local government areas of Berwick, Pakenham and Cranbourne; and thirdly, the Werribee corridor located in the Werribee local government area.

The real difficulty with these planned growth corridors is that they do not exist in isolation. The problem for growth corridors of the 1990s and beyond is that they are an extension of today's centres. Existing growth centres are already bursting at the seams with social problems associated with the current massive population growth. We must be careful to manage future population growth so that it does not, firstly, put pressure on existing areas that are already asset deficient and facing severe community strains, secondly, replicate the same problems experienced by current growth areas, and, thirdly, neglect or leapfrog current growth areas on Melbourne's suburban fringes.

The size of future growth has already been identified and plans are well under way to examine and manage it. Prior to the election of the Cain government, urban planning was non-existent. Growth was driven in the traditional manner: with land speculation as the vehicle and profit motive as the engine.

I refer honourable members to Leonie Sandercock's book *Cities for Sale* and to chapter 7 entitled "Melbourne: Capitalism Crude and Uncivilised" for an historical perspective on urban land development in Victoria. Under previous Liberal governments the planning for, or provision of, tangible community assets and infrastructure was ignored, or if identified and promises made, they were not delivered. The Cain Labor government has the twin problems of looking ahead and planning and delivering as well as catching up on the neglect, if not abuse, that is the legacy of the Liberal years in Victoria.

My priority as a member of Parliament representing a current growth area is to ensure that it is not leapfrogged to provide facilities for the turn of the century growth areas. The Thomastown electorate comprises the suburbs of Lalor, Mill Park, parts of Epping and Bundoora as well as Thomastown. The electorate is entirely within the City of Whittlesea and corresponds with the bulk of Whittlesea's urban population.

A thumbnail sketch of the Thomastown electorate shows the older established areas straddling both sides of High Street-the Epping railway line transport corridor. The older parts of Thomastown and Lalor, with its initial growth surge after the second world war, now provide a population that is ageing faster than the Melbourne population as a whole.

This older section of the electorate is surrounded to the west by the current housing boom, and to the east by the new suburb of Mill Park created out of the rural landscape of the mid-1970s. This rural to urban conversion continues to this day with the successive, staged release of housing estates. Family homes are offered for private ownership by developers: firstly, by the T & G Insurance Group now the National Mutual Association of Australasia Ltd and soon by the ANZ Bank.

A socioeconomic snapshot of the Whittlesea municipality at the beginning of the 1990s is detailed in *A Study of Community Service Needs in the City of Whittlesea* prepared by the Whittlesea Hot Spot Study Committee which notes the following features: firstly, high population growth. In 1986 the total resident population of the Whittlesea local growth area - LGA - was 79 182, an increase of 13 525 from 1981. The annual rate of growth was 3.4 per cent in those years.

For the period 1986 to 1990 the population growth rate for Whittlesea increased to 4.5 per cent compared with 1.1 per cent for Melbourne as a whole. Put simply and dramatically, the Whittlesea LGA is currently growing four times faster than Melbourne as a whole. I compare that with some other local growth areas that have experienced substantial negative population growth

for the same period. Northcote is expected to experience an annual population decline of 1.2 per cent; Brunswick, 1.1 per cent and Preston, Fitzroy and Collingwood, 0.9 per cent.

The second feature identified was the age composition. The age profile for this area is a true paradox. Although its youth population is exploding, its elderly population increases in absolute numbers, as well as getting older, at a quicker rate than the population of Melbourne as a whole. In 1986 almost 50 per cent of the population were under 25 years. Between 1986 and 2001 the population of people aged 15 to 24 years in Whittlesea will increase from 14 600 to 29 900. That is a 205 per cent increase compared with an 18 per cent decline for Melbourne as a whole.

In 1986 more than 6 per cent of the Whittlesea LGA population was over the age of 60 years. Between 1986 and 2001 the population aged 60 years or more will increase by 330 per cent, from 5100 to 16 800. For Melbourne during the same period the increase will be only 17 per cent.

The third feature is ethnicity. The population of the Whittlesea municipality is characterised by its rich blend of people from different ethnic backgrounds. In 1986 34.4 per cent of Whittlesea's population was born overseas, with 30 per cent of the total population being born in non-English speaking countries. That is double Melbourne's rate.

When one considers second generation Australians, one notes that 55 per cent of Whittlesea's population were either born in, or had one or more parents born in, a non-English speaking country. The fact that people have come from at least 40 different countries produces an even greater variety of cultures and subregional cultures within the Whittlesea municipality's population.

When age and ethnicity as population characteristics combine, one finds that 53 per cent of people over the age of 55 years are from non-English speaking countries. When one examines the proficiency in English of the residents of Whittlesea one finds that the percentage of people who speak English not well or not at all comprises nearly 10 per cent of the population. This compares with the Melbourne average of 3.6 per cent. Of people of non-English speaking background and of retirement age, about three-quarters speak English either not well or not at all.

The fourth feature is education. Twenty-four per cent of the adult population of Whittlesea left school at less than the age of fifteen years. The secondary education system retention rate in Whittlesea is 45 per cent. That was the lowest in the NorthEastern Region and less than two-thirds of the school retention rate of Northcote, for example, which was 72 per cent.

The proportion of the population engaged in tertiary education on a full-time or part-time basis is 3.9 per cent compared with 5.8 per cent for Melbourne as a whole.

In terms of the qualifications held, 3.6 per cent of the population possesses a tertiary qualification. By this I mean a degree or a diploma. This is fewer than half the equivalent proportion of Melbourne as a whole, which is 10.3 per cent.

The fifth feature is housing. The overwhelming form of housing in the Whittlesea area is privately owned and occupied dwellings. There is little rental accommodation and little Ministry of Housing and Construction or other government agency accommodation in the Whittlesea municipality.

The sixth and last feature is income. The median family income in Whittlesea as recorded by the 1986 census was \$26 600 a year - a little below the median for Melbourne of \$27 900.

I have taken the trouble of detailing that snapshot of the Whittlesea local government area -LGA - suburban fringe not as a sociological statement of what is but, rather, as the basis of finding a way forward. The people of Thomastown, Lalor, Mill Park, Epping and Bundoora make an important contribution to society. They are the families with young children, struggling to meet mortgage repayments; both parents are working and the family requires two cars. At the same time, they are house proud and community proud.

They are older people our senior citizens, proud and respected, and they want to enjoy their retirement after years of toil, working in mainly non-professional jobs and building both their ethnic communities and their homes-their suburbs-in a new land.

They are teenagers-thousands in number-torn between the cultures of old and new, physically isolated, bored, with little to do and plenty of time to do it in.

These are the people of the suburban fringe, the new suburbs, the new housing estates and growth corridors of Melbourne. They have special needs to be satisfied now and in the future.

Of course the best people to identify these needs are the residents of the electorate. Since 3 February they have indicated to me some of their priorities, and I should like to mention them. They want the extension of the heavy rail system past Epping; the extension of the tram line past Bundoora; upgrading of the local bus services by the improvement of east-west bus routes, and especially the establishment of a bus route along Childs Road; the extension of bus routes into the newly developed housing areas; the extension of bus timetables to provide services until late Friday and Saturday evenings; an examination of the possibility of providing some form of Sunday time-table; the extension of bus routes to community amenities as they are developed, and the use of community buses by community groups.

They want to ensure the building of the new centre for the Lalor District Community Health Centre; the establishment of a community health centre in Mill Park; the purchase of land for and the building of a general public hospital in Epping; and the construction of primary, secondary and post-secondary education facilities, in particular the on-time completion of the Mill Park Heights Primary School, the Mill Park Secondary College and the Epping TAFE College.

They want the establishment of informal drop-in centres staffed by youth workers for young people; the expansion of recreational facilities, both structured and passive, with special priorities for the participation of girls and women, and the development of an indoor swimming pool and gymnasium complex for the public.

They want the expansion of residential care facilities for the aged; respite care to assist people in caring for relatives at home; the provision of ethnospecific meals on wheels via appropriate kitchen facilities; additional community meeting room facilities; and the provision of bilingual workers such as counsellors and the provision of information in community languages.

They want support for the family support agencies in the area; support for the ethnic support agencies in the area; and the extension of the neighbourhood house centres.

As each day proceeds the list grows and the demands become more specific. This is not a wish list but rather a must list. The social justice priorities of the Labor government and its budgetary vehicles must bring about the reallocation of human, physical and financial resources to these growth areas.

These people have put in. They have worked hard for years, with both parents in the household working and paying their taxes. They are building their homes and creating the new suburbs. It is now the turn of government at all levels to reciprocate.

It is pleasing to note the commitment given by the State government to address the needs of people in the outer suburbs with its social justice policy and now its new Department of Planning and Urban Growth. The Federal government also made announcements relating to urban infrastructure during the recent Federal election campaign, and the local municipal authorities recently organised a forum of those municipalities covering the growth corridors.

My task as a member of Parliament representing an electorate with rapid population growth on the outer suburban fringe is to ensure the needs of the people are addressed. In the Thomastown electorate I will be continuing the good work started by Beth Gleeson. My commitment is not only to be hardworking but also to be vocal until our objectives are met.

In concluding my inaugural speech to Parliament I should like to thank all the Australian Labor Party workers and supporters - too numerous to name individually - who helped and voted for me in the by-election. I shall return that support and trust. In doing so I commend these Bills to the House.